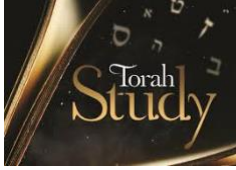


20170813 **Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25 "Walking the Talk: Having a Circumcised Heart"**



"Walking the Talk: Having a Circumcised Heart"

Series: "Lessons for Living: A Christian Walk through the Torah"

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45 Ekev | עקב | *"Consequence"* [Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25](#) (13 Aug, 2017/ 21 Av 5777)

- Deuteronomy 7:12 | Blessings for Obedience
- Deuteronomy 8:1 | A Warning Not to Forget God in Prosperity
- Deuteronomy 9:1 | The Consequences of Rebelling against God
- Deuteronomy 10:1 | The Second Pair of Tablets
- Deuteronomy 10:12 | The Essence of the Law
- Deuteronomy 11:1 | Rewards for Obedience¹
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Today's portion is about our spiritual journey. We each have our own personal journey, and we each have a journey together as we walk with one another in a community of faith, the church. The Torah portion this morning seems a bit disjointed at first glance, but in reality it has a connected thread. Please open your Bibles today to Deuteronomy Chapter 7, and we will feast on some of the scriptures that take us through this Torah portion called "consequences" in Hebrew. The word itself reminds us that we have choices along the way. God amazingly made the first choice to give us free choice in whether we accept Him or not, and whether we will then choose to obey and serve Him. Our choices have outcomes. On one hand it is an empowering thought, but on the other hand it can be frightful to contemplate the seriousness of our own choices. In this portion Moses restates and relates to the children of Israel conduct they should pursue and conduct they should avoid. He reminds them (and us) that true matters of the faith are not outward trappings, but matters of the heart. He is saying that true faith is substance over form. True faith is not circumcision of the body, but rather circumcision of the heart.

Let's take up at verse 12 of Chapter 7

PROMISE OF BLESSING TO THE BELIEVER

- 12 “Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers.
- 13 “He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you. (principle 1)

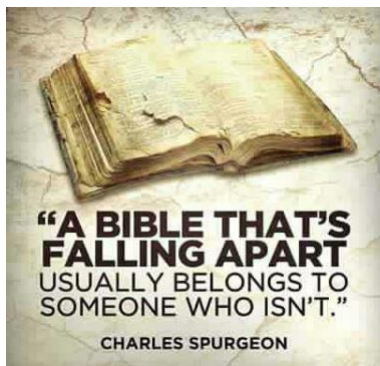


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In this remarkable passage Moses tells the people that God's blessings are real. God's blessings are powerful. The Hebrew word for "Blessing" comes from the word for "knee". God's blessing is a picture of a loving father bowed down on his knee presenting a gift to his child. Just as you love to delight your child and give him or her what they need, so does your heavenly father love to delight you. For many of us the idea of "being blessed" includes the idea of a lack of hardship in our lives; but, what does the Bible say? The Bible tells us that hardship and work can be part of that blessing. Remember that Adam "tended the garden" even before the fall. We have already studied that Avodah means "work, service, and even worship". If you ask an Irishman how he is, if things are going great guns he might answer you, "I am blessed with work." Flip over now to Deuteronomy 8:2, and look closely as Moses speaks to the people telling them that even though they were God's blessed chosen people they suffered hardship in the desert that had a purpose in their spiritual development. He also warns them (and us!) to not forget the Lord when we go through prosperous times. It's easy to do just that. We often can forget how much we need Him when things are smooth sailing. (Principle 2)

BLESSING INCLUDES GOING THROUGH HARDSHIP: LEAN ON HIS WORD

- 2 "You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.
- 3 "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.
- 4 "Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.²



Church notice that even in their "blessing" God took them through trials. Do not mistakenly believe that blessing means lack of problems. The text tells us that God took them through the wilderness and all that was associated with it so that they might be humble and that they might be tested as to the quality of their "worship". Hardships were encountered so that God would "know what was in their heart, whether they would keep His commandments or not." (Prin 3) You see Church, God allows us to go through testing so

that we might understand that sometimes things are just out of our control. That humbles us. Even though things can become out of our control we still have choices in how we respond in the midst of those trials. It could be an illness for which there is no cure, or it could be a problem that seems unsolvable. Hold on to His hand, and you just keep blessing Him with your mouth AND your heart, and keep serving Him. Jesus tells us that when we are deprived of the physical comforts it is the

² *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.* (1995). (Dt 8:2-4). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

SPIRITUAL bread that will bring us comfort and bring us through the trial. Jesus tells us that in our trials and in our pain we must turn to His Word for truth and comfort. You see, that's what Jesus did. When Satan took him high up on the cliffs there by Jericho, Jesus was spent, weary, and exhausted. He quotes these very words of Moses in saying, that the spiritual things of God take precedence over the physical. In the really hard times we have to depend on Biblical truth to get us through the trial. I've heard it said, "The Bible is meant to be bread for daily living not cake for special occasions." Feast on His Word. It is God's personal love letter to you! (Principle 4)

EASY TO FORGET THE LORD WHEN TIMES ARE GOOD

Turn now to verse 16 of Chapter 8 and let's continue.

- 16 “In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.
- 17 “Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’
- 18 “But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.
- 19 “It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish.

**Disobedience To
GOD Always Brings
Consequences.**

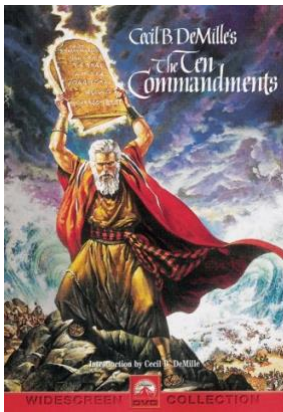
So, what is this saying? It is telling us that as God prospers us financially we are predisposed to 1) Forget how much we need Him, and 2) To forget that it all came from Him. He gives us our skills, our intellect, and even our next breath. When we forget that the material blessing was His doing, He warns that the end to such thinking is to perish. We must continually remember that our prosperity comes from not from our great talents and abilities but from His hand. It's all from Him. It's all about Him. When it becomes all about us, if He loves us He must chasten us. (Hebrews 12:6) (Principle 5)

GOD GIVES US MULTIPLE CHANCES WHEN WE BLOW IT

Let's now move to Chapter 9 and look at an instance of disobedience of the people.

- 8 “Even at Horeb (Sinai) you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that He would have destroyed you.
- 9 “When I went up to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD had made with you, then I remained on the mountain forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water.
- 10 “The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.
- 11 “It came about at the end of forty days and nights that the LORD gave me the two

- tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant.
- 12 “Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, go down from here quickly, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made a molten image for themselves.
- 13 “The LORD spoke further to me, saying, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people.



We read that Moses was up on Sinai where he received the tablets of stone which God had cut out and then written upon the 10 "things" with His very own finger. While Moses was up there, the people began to party and they fell into debauchery. Under Aaron's leadership they created a golden calf that they worshipped. This was made out of all the gold that God had given them from the Egyptians' wealth. The people made this choice being fully aware of God's presence up on the mountain. Finding them engaged in such evil, Moses took them down from the mountain and in anger he broke the tablets and he ground the golden calf into dust and made the people drink the gold dust that had been poured into the creek. You can read this in Deuteronomy 9:17-21. (Principle 6)

Then in Chapter 10 we learn that another set of tablets were made. This time God instructed Moses to cut out the tablets himself, haul them up the mountain, where God then again wrote the commandments on that second set of stones that Moses had cut.

- 1 “At that time the LORD said to me, ‘Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood for yourself.
- 2 ‘I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark.’

So what do we learn from all of this? God blesses our obedience and He curses our disobedience. But even when we sin, God is a God of second chances. Just like Moses had to cut the tablets themselves the second time, we are often required to work our way through the consequences of our sins. God still loves us and He wants a relationship with us. But this time we note that it took more effort on the part of Moses. (Principle 7)

CIRCUMCISE OUR HEARTS: THE INSIDE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUTSIDE

Now I want to turn to what I believe is the fundamental unifying truth in this *parashah*. Moses tells us In Chapter 10:16 “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.” What could it possibly mean to "circumcise one's heart"? As most of you all know, circumcision is and was a procedure where part of a man's most intimate body part is cut off. This was an outward sign of an inward faith. But if the outward sign is done without the inward faith it is meaningless. Paul talks about this at great lengths in the

New Testament.

It's sort of like baptism. If an unbeliever goes through baptism all that happens is he or she gets wet. If an unbeliever eats the bread and the wine in Holy Communion they receive nothing but calories. When a believer in Jesus submits to baptism and follows Jesus' instruction of obedience it means something. When a Christ-Follower obeys the Lord's command and partakes in the Lord's Supper it means something. When we "circumcise" our hearts, we allow God to cut off the periphery of our hearts and we allow our hearts to be sensitive, vulnerable, and we even allow our hearts to be hurt. This is the opposite of being a "stubborn and stiff-necked" person. (Principle 8)

You see, God is ALWAYS more concerned with what is going on INSIDE of us than what things look like on the OUTSIDE of us. God is ALWAYS more interested in substance than form. This in no way negates the physical requirements the Lord put on his people: ritual cleansing, no mixed garments, etc. But in this passage God is telling us that a circumcised heart will be an obedient heart. It is that kind of heart that listens to the whispers of the Holy Spirit. It is that kind of heart that finds joy in the desert. It is that kind of heart that understands that all good things, all blessings of all kind, come from Him. They are not our own doing. (Principle 9)

Let me give you an example. Most Sundays I dress quite casually. That is part of how we are in a country church in Texas. But when I wear a suit or a necktie, it is me saying, "HEY GUYS LISTEN!" That is why I am wearing a suit this morning as I officiate in bringing you the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion). But if I come with a suit but wickedness in my heart, this suit is meaningless. God is WAY more interested in a clean repentant heart than in clean shiny shoes. He is telling us to circumcise our hearts; focus on the inside, giving priority to the things that God sees.

So, can we talk? God loves you and He wants a relationship with you. You cannot do enough "good things" to ACHIEVE this relationship. You can only RECEIVE this relationship. (Eph 2:8-9) Some of the words, deeds, and thoughts you and I have had separate us from God. That is sin. The Bible says that, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way and God laid on Him the sin of us all." (Isa 53:6). Sin separated me and you from God, but Jesus' sacrifice removed that sin giving us right standing with God. "He that knew no sin was made sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (1 Cor 5:21) Today you have a personal choice to make. It is a choice with eternal consequences. The Gospel is Life-Changing. It changes not only this life, but gives you a secure place with the Lord in heaven forever. So, how can we have a "circumcised heart"? Receiving Jesus as your savior is the first step in that process. Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868 Tel: 936-825-1227

THIS IS A "TRUE STORY"

Back in the 50's there was a well known radio Host/comedian/song writer in Hollywood named Stuart Hamblen who was noted for his drinking, Womanizing, partying, etc.

One of his bigger hits at the time was
"I won't go hunting with you Jake,
But I'll go chasing women."

One day, along came a young preacher holding
A tent revival. Hamblen had him on his radio show
Presumably to poke fun at him.

In order to gather more material for his show,
Hamblen showed up at one of the revival meetings.

Early in the service the preacher announced,
"There is one man in this audience who is a big fake."
There were probably others who thought the same thing,
But Hamblen was convinced that he was the one the preacher
Was talking about (some would call that conviction)
But he was having none of that.

Still the words continued to haunt him until a couple
Of nights later he showed up drunk at the preacher's
Hotel door around 2AM demanding that the preacher
Pray for him!

But the preacher refused, saying, "This is between you and God
And I'm not going to get in the middle of it."

But he did invite Stuart in and they talked until
About 5 AM at which point Stuart dropped to his
Knees and with tears, cried out to God.

But that is not the end of the story.
Stuart quit drinking, quit chasing women,
Quit everything that was 'fun.' Soon he began
To lose favour with the Hollywood crowd.

He was ultimately fired by the radio station when
He refused to accept a beer company as a sponsor.

Hard times were upon him. He tried writing a couple
Of "Christian" songs but the only one that had

Much success was "This Old House",
Written for his friend Rosemary Clooney.

As he continued to struggle, **a long time friend
Named John took him aside and told him,
'All your troubles started when you 'got religion,'
Was it worth it all?'**

Stuart answered simply, "Yes."

Then his friend asked, "You liked your booze so much,
Don't you ever miss it?" And his answer was,
"No" **John** then said, "I don't understand how
You could give it up so easily."

And Stuart's response was, "It's no big secret.
All things are possible with God."
To this John said, "That's a catchy phrase.
You should write a song about it."

And as they say, "The rest is history."

The song Carl Stuart Hamblen wrote was "It Is No Secret."

"It is no secret what God can do.
What He's done for others, He'll do for you.

With arms wide open, He'll welcome you.
It is no secret, what God can do...."

**By the way... The friend was John Wayne.
And the young preacher who refused to pray for Stuart Hamblen?
..That was Billy Graham.**